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ABSTRACT

This document presents a dropout prevention planning guide developed by the Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education of the Maine Department of Education, an office established to provide technical consultant services to public and private schools for identifying students at risk of school failure, and the development of dropout prevention strategies and alternative programs to meet their needs. A preface notes that the graduation rate for Maine's class of 1988 was 74.4% and identifies a need to improve the graduation rate. The major portion of the document consists of eight color-coded sections. The first section on the planning process presents a framework for approaching the dropout/at-risk problem and discusses the purpose and philosophy for dropout prevention planning, characteristics of successful prevention programs, and essential program elements. The next section on identifying students at-risk looks at possible causes/contributing factors of students at-risk, focusing on student, home/family, community, and school factors. Other sections focus on guidelines for alternative education, parent-school partnerships, business-education partnerships, setting a school climate for success, association and organizations, and relevant Maine statutes and rules. (NB)

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DROPOUT PREVENTION PLANNING GUIDE

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OFFICE OF TRUANCY, DROPOUT & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE HOUSE STATION #23
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SEPTEMBER, 1992

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The Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education provides technical consultant services to public and private schools for identifying students at risk of school failure, and the development of dropout prevention strategies and alternative programs to meet their needs.

The Office, located in the Department of Education building in Augusta, collects and disseminates, on request, informational materials and research packets regarding alternative programs, dropouts and truancy.

The Consultant serves as a liaison between the Commissioner and other Departments of State regarding policy issues affecting students at risk.

The Office was established by the 112th Legislature as a special enactment in 1986. The legislation mandated a fifteen member Advisory Committee whose structure is defined in law to represent four Departments of State, public education and business. Committee members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education to serve two year terms. The Advisory Committee must file an annual report to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education.

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HELPING YOUTH AT RISK SUCCEED

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Frank J. Antonucci, Jr.
Consultant
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OVERVIEW

What can we do about youth who are at risk.....

- **of dropping out of school or remaining illiterate?**
- **of becoming teenage parents?**
- **of becoming dependent on alcohol or drugs?**
- **of entering the criminal justice system?**
- **of being permanently unemployed or underemployed?**
- **of living on the streets or running away?**
- **of never becoming socially productive human beings?**

In the last few years, we have seen a renewed interest in and concern for the educational and social needs of youth at risk. This interest is evident at both the national and the state level and is now being expressed at local levels. Today, in Maine, we are seeing increasing efforts and activities at the community level to better serve at risk youth *through preventive and corrective strategies at earlier ages.*

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Approaches to addressing the problems of youth at risk must be focused at three distinct policy levels - the community, the school and the individual educational staff member. Coordinated changes and actions must occur at all three levels, and must focus on the youth and the family. Economic, social welfare and job training (retraining) issues go far beyond the ordinary educational policy matters. School success, more than ever in the past, depends on a recognition of the reality of the social and economic factors impinging on and often threatening our cultural values. Collaborative planning, sharing of resources and innovative reward structures for all players (students, administrators, teachers, community persons) must be promoted and nurtured as new strategies and programs are implemented to meet the needs of youth at risk.

NEED TO IMPROVE GRADUATION RATES

According to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), the graduation rate for Maine's Class of 1988 was 74.4%. This means that 25.6% of Maine's 9th graders in October 1984 did not graduate with their classmates in 1988. Historically, this national rate has remained at or about 25% for a quarter of a century, despite the fact that increasing sums of money have been spent, and more services and programs have been provided to address the needs of students. Maine graduation rates have risen since 1988, reflecting an 81% rate for the Class of 1991. Maine graduation rates do not include GED completers under age 20. If these completers were attributed by age to the traditional diploma graduates, Maine's completion rate for the Class of 1991 would be at least 89%.

Compared to otherwise similar people, those persons with educational deficiencies (including dropouts):

- **are three times more likely to be underemployed or become unemployed.**
- **once employed, take longer to find new work.**
- **once employed, have lower paying jobs.**
- **once employed, are more likely to lose their jobs.**

Several attempts have been made to quantify the costs of early school leaving and non-completion of high school. Estimates range as high as $237 billion less in direct earnings over their lifetimes for each national class of dropouts (non-completers). As a result, state and local governments collect $71 billion less in taxes. These costs do not reflect the increased social welfare and other related expenses related to meeting the needs of these at risk youth in their adult lifetimes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

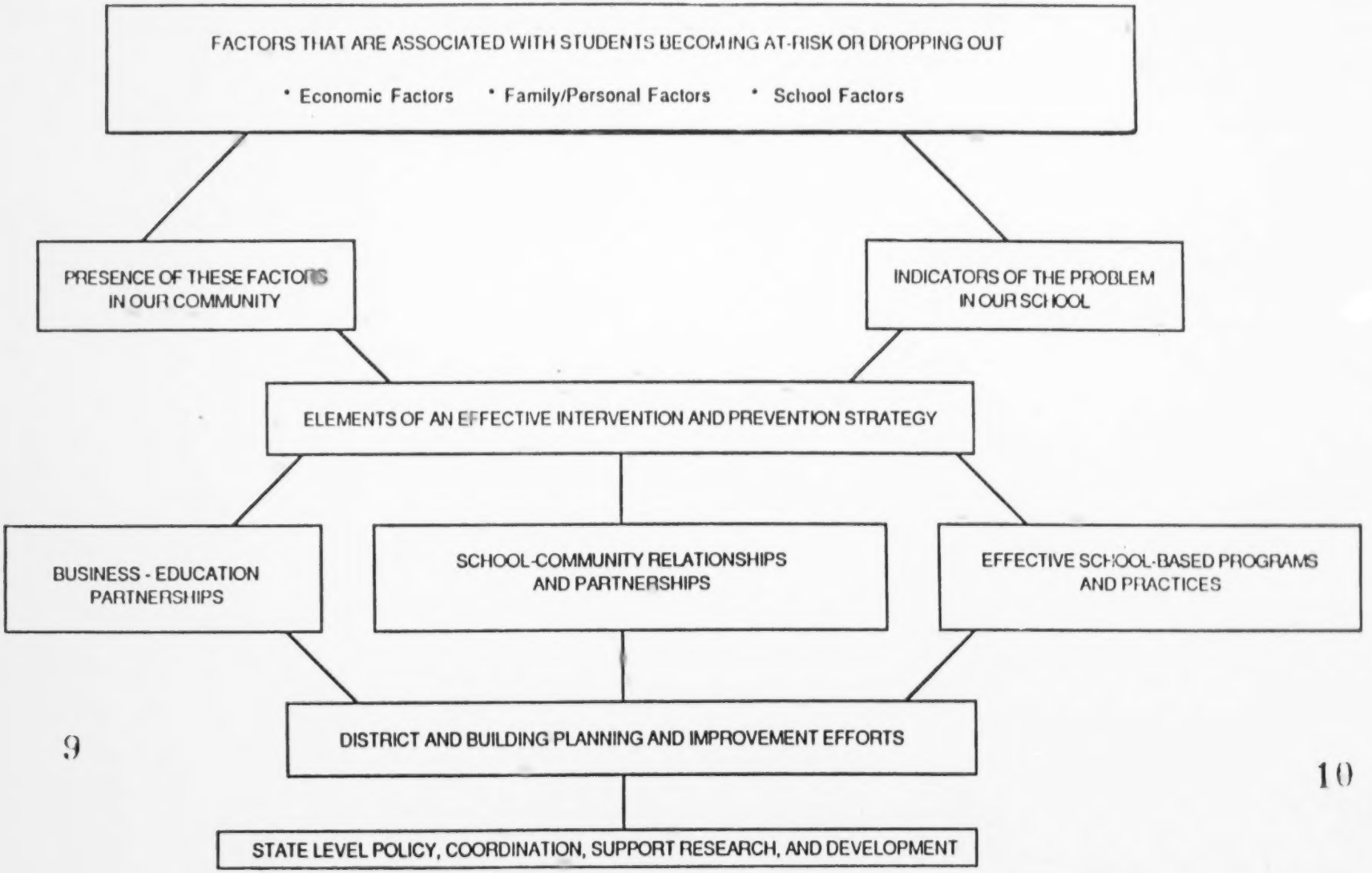
Policymakers at local and state levels need to be aware of youth at risk initiatives being planned and be involved with those being implemented. Technical services must be available and accessible to school units and communities as they move into and through the stages of planning, developing and implementation of new programs. Accountability and assessment strategies must be created to provide feedback on programmatic success and progress, on a short-term and long-term basis. Structural barriers, interagency rivalries and traditions and state/local antagonism must be addressed and refocused and reduced. Coordination and collaboration have hidden costs. Human pressures of time management require recognition of individual investments above and beyond current duties. Clear measures of improved delivery of services and/or tangible rewards must be perceived by all players, at all levels. Incentive funding mechanisms must be provided to sustain these collaborative efforts over time. Success for youth at risk in school and in life demands a total refocusing of all our efforts. The task is both do-able and rewarding to those who make the commitment and to those who will benefit from the results.

THE

PLANNING

PROCESS

FRAMEWORK FOR APPROACHING THE DROPOUT/AT-RISK PROBLEM


FACTORS THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENTS BECOMING AT-RISK OR DROPPING OUT
• Economic Factors • Family/Personal Factors • School Factors
PRESENCE OF THESE FACTORS IN OUR COMMUNITY
INDICATORS OF THE PROBLEM IN OUR SCHOOL
ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION STRATEGY
BUSINESS - EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES
DISTRICT AND BUILDING PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS
STATE LEVEL POLICY, COORDINATION, SUPPORT RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMENT

SOURCE: The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, Andover, Massachusetts

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Truancy, Dropout & Alternative Education

Purpose and Philosophy for Dropout Prevention Planning

- The problem of dropping out is more accurately termed a symptom. Dropping out is often the manifestation of broader, deeper problems that have been building over a long period. (A particular event may trigger it; however, once a student has left school, problems generally increase.) The more fundamental issues must be considered and attacked in order to prevent dropping out. The precise causes of dropping out are difficult to identify, and researchers and educators have many different opinions. Approaches must be based on the best judgment of the needs of each student.

- Many of the problems facing students are related. Whether termed dropping out, school discipline, teenage pregnancy, academic failure, delinquency, substance abuse, or given another name, the problems, their origins, and the answers are often similar. The need is to aid the adjustment of those who are having trouble and to intervene to remove hurdles that hinder learning and positive development.

- Every student needs to experience success in the learning environment, and <u>all</u> can in one form or another. Unlocking the key for each child opens the opportunity for him or her to reach full potential.

- School is for everyone. This attitude must become pervasive among teachers, administrators, parents and students if dropping out is to be prevented. Young people must be truly encouraged to stay in school. Methods of teaching must be creative and flexible, responding to the needs, values and learning style of the individual.

- The goal of dropout prevention must be infused throughout the educational system. Often, what is best for potential dropouts is what is best for all students.

- Staying in school is not sufficient in itself. There must be a clear sense of purpose in the educational process, and whenever a student leaves school, as a graduate or otherwise, there should be a plan for the next step.

- The schools cannot do the job alone. Too many factors beyond the schools' reach are related. It takes all those in the community working together in a partnership. Dropout prevention must be seen by all as the job of everyone.

- Planning is essential to a successful comprehensive, coordinated program for dropout prevention. While every community needs a comprehensive system of services, the strategies used to deal with the problem will vary from community to community. The key is the process by which community members work cooperatively to determine their own needs and propose strategies to meet those needs.

- Many important and effective efforts for dropout prevention are already operating. The need is to coordinate them and initiate further efforts in order to bring to bear most effectively all possible resources for the purpose of dropout prevention.

- Nothing less than a broad human services delivery system flexible enough to meet the needs of every child must be developed.

- Such problems as unemployment and crime may be associated with dropping out. Dropout prevention is closely linked not only to the development of the full potential of every individual, but also to the future well-being of Maine.

More succinctly put, the following principles are espoused for Maine schools:

- **School is for everyone.**

- **Every student should have opportunities for success in school.**

- **Keeping students in school requires addressing the broad range of problems facing young people.**

- **All educators--teachers, administrators, student services staff, and others--as well as the community must work cooperatively to reach the goal of dropout prevention.**

- **A planned, comprehensive approach creates a successful dropout prevention effort.**

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Successful alternative and prevention programs have several general characteristics. These features give such programs a character distinctly different from many of the isolated, independent programs and help assure their long-range effectiveness. These characteristics, shared ideas, and ideals include the following:

A. Planning

Each school unit should use a logical process of planning to assist a diverse group of individuals from the school and community to work through the identification of problems, the selection of goals, the agreement on appropriate objectives and strategies, and the necessary resources for meeting these objectives.

B. Comprehensiveness

Successful plans should provide a framework for a wide variety of strategies to address the needs of youngsters in all grades, K-12. Both school and community roles and approaches needed for many kinds of problems should be clearly identified.

C. Collaboration

Bringing diverse groups together in unique and creative ways will bear fruit. When people join hands to work for the benefit of high-risk students in a coordinated way, the rewards are great.

D. Commitment of a wide range of people

Combining talents has proven its effectiveness. Shared vision and personal dedication of people from many walks of life in the community-wide focus will be a positive and productive force.

E. Dropout prevention as an integral part of the overall school program

Within the school system itself -- including superintendent, all teachers, student services staff, cafeteria workers, custodians, and many others -- a united effort where all persons feel that they are a part of dropout prevention is necessary. All school staff work together to make school a place where youngsters like to be.

ESSENTIAL PROGRAM ELEMENTS

In addition to having broad characteristics in common, successful prevention programs share essential program elements which contribute to their success.

A. Interagency advisory council for dropout prevention

An interagency group can bring together all those concerned with youth at risk so that their problems can be attacked effectively. Members should include educators, human services and justice system professionals, business and industry representatives, civic leaders, school board members, parents and other concerned citizens. A Dropout Prevention Committee is required by Maine statute for all school units, which requires this structure for each school adminsitrative unit.

B. School assistance team for dropout prevention

Within the school system itself are many persons who are contributing to dropout prevention every day; yet they are often not aware of one anothers' roles. The school assistance team provides a vehicle for gaining professional and technical perspectives on dropping out and for mobilizing the school system to keep students in school. Administrators, classroom teachers, student services, special services, school nurses, and compensatory education staff as well as others should be involved. Linkages with the interagency advisory council should be formalized as problems are clarified and solutions are planned.

C. Dropout prevention coordinator on the central office staff

Funding resources should be directed primarily to support the position of a dropout prevention coordinator on the central office staff for the program. The coordinator can provide the cohesion a program with many components demands and focuses attention on dropout prevention. While administrators have great concern for dropping out, finding the time to develop and carry out an effective program to keep students in school can be difficult in the midst of other demands. The dropout prevention coordinator's central concern is bringing together all those who must work together for dropout prevention and assuring that their ideas and plans are implemented. Organization, facilitation, and communication skills are essential for the coordinator.

D. Joint training

For any group of people to work well together, there must be a common understanding of a problem and general agreement on direction. Training needs for administrators and staff are vital and ongoing. The Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education will provide Dropout Prevention workshops for all school units as a vital first step. The workshop will include studies on learning styles, factors influencing dropping out such as family problems, various models for dropout prevention, explanation of the role of human services agencies, and planning, among other topics.

E. Written plan of action

Using a basic planning format, each school unit should develop a written plan of action as part of their required school improvement plans. It is in these plans that the uniqueness of each program begins to be seen. From surveying the problem, setting goals, and identifying strategies, to determining outcome measures, the planning process provides a step-by-step method to increase the likelihood that the program will achieve its purpose. The approaches taken should include school-based and community strategies. A plan has to remain flexible and make adjustments and new strategies as the need arises.

F. Media Component

While every plan should be different, every plan will be alike in one specific objective. Plans should include activities to create community recognition and understanding of the problem and willingness to combat it by a wide range of people are critical for success. While awareness campaigns will be implemented differently in each community, the outcomes will be the same -- increased support for keeping students in school and making schooling more relevant for all students.

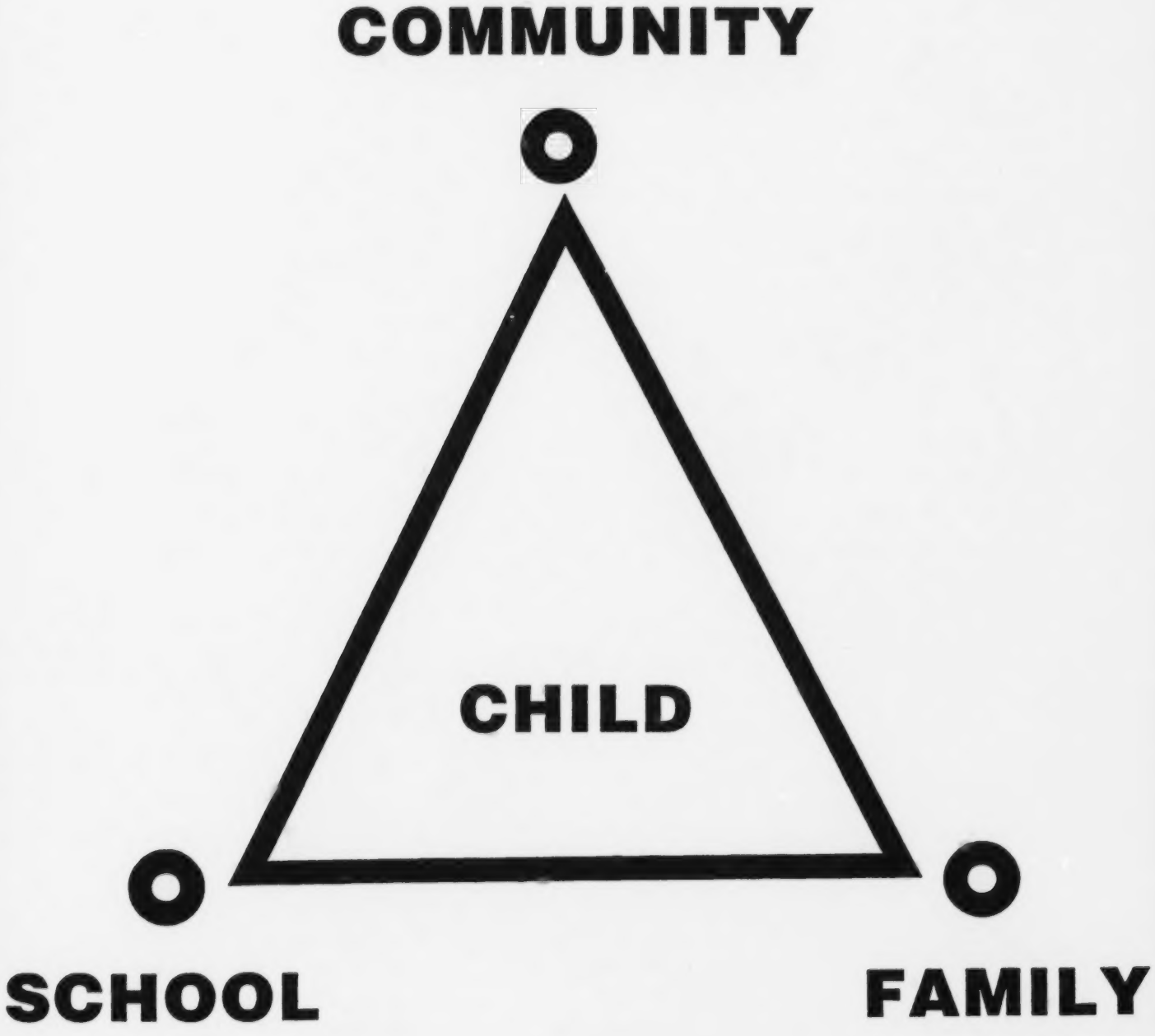
G. Data collection system

Early in the development of Maine's plan for dropout prevention, it became evident that the lack of dependable information about dropouts and high-risk students would impede the development of dropout prevention efforts. Over time, new statewide systems of collecting dropout data must be created. Schools systems, however, can review their own tracking mechanisms for counting dropouts and assessing the needs of students at risk as part of their planning activities.

IDENTIFYING

STUDENTS

AT-RISK


COMMUNITY
CHILD
SCHOOL
FAMILY

POSSIBLE CAUSES/CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF STUDENTS AT-RISK

THE COMMUNITY

1. lack of support for school

2. lack of, or unresponsive community services agencies

3. community upheaval and social change

4. loss of neighborhood schools and sense of "ownership" of schools

5. negative peer influences

6. high incidence of substance abuse, criminal activity

7. gang activity

8. inadequate provision for transportation

POSSIBLE CAUSES/CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF STUDENTS AT-RISK

THE SCHOOL

1. uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum

2. improper class placement (above or below abilities)

3. failure to identify and provide services for students at risk

4. poor pupil-teacher relationships

5. insufficient counseling and guidance staff

6. high student/teacher ratio

7. low teacher expectations

8. lack of parent-school communication and involvement

9. too weak, or too rigid administration of policies

POSSIBLE CAUSES/CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF STUDENTS AT-RISK

THE CHILD

1. poor self-concept; low self-esteem

2. low academics; particularly behind in reading and math

3. socially isolated; poor inter-personal skills; lack of positive peer relationships at school

4. feeling of not belonging at school, of being different

5. feeling of lack of control over life (i.e. "No matter how hard I try I will not succeed.")

6. little or no extra-curricular involvement

7. mental and/or emotional instability; childhood depression

8. unidentified learning disabilities

9. vision and/or auditory problems that have gone undiagnosed

10. language barriers

11. poor health

12. negative peer relationships; older, non-school oriented friends

13. substance abuse

14. fear of school, teachers, and/or administrators

15. experienced recent traumatic event (divorce, death of a loved one)

16. fear of physical harm going to (or from) or at school

17. teenage pregnancy and/or parenting

POSSIBLE CAUSES/CONTRIBUTIONS FACTORS OF STUDENTS AT-RISK

THE FAMILY

1. parents lack of appreciation for value of education

2. parents are non high school completers

3. financial difficulties (lack of adequate nutrition, clothing, transportation, inability to pay fees)

4. ineffective parenting; lack of parental control and supervision

5. familial instability (one-parent household; parental discord; poor parent-child relationship; frequent moving

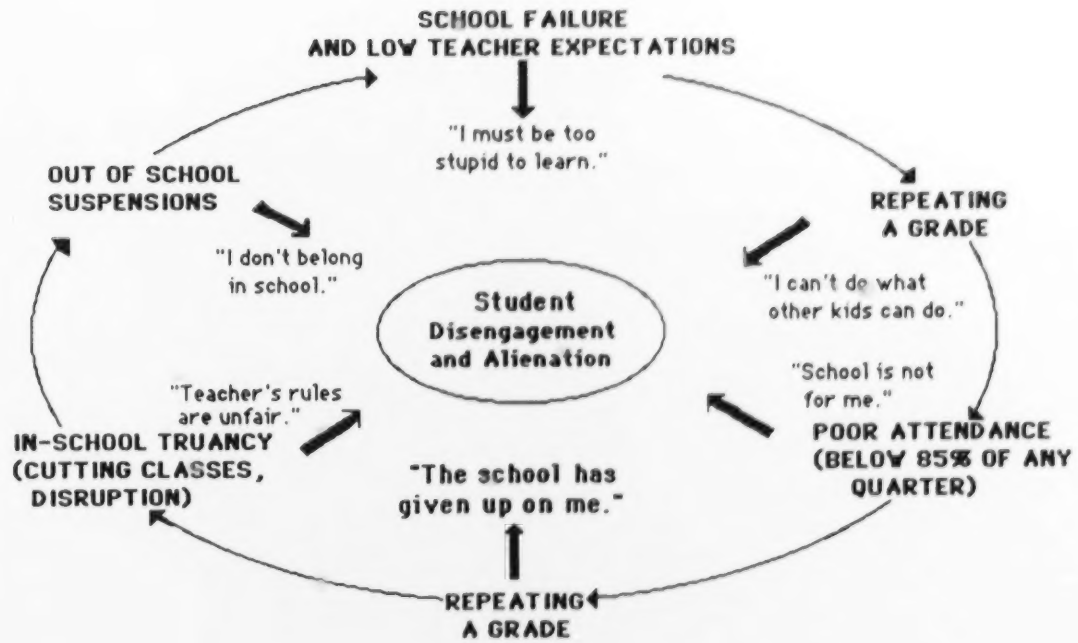
6. inappropriate role models

7. child abuse and/or neglect (physical, psychological, sexual)

8. substance abuse, alcoholic parent(s)

9. parental convenience (older sibling kept home to baby-sit for younger children)

THE AT-RISK MERRY-GO-ROUND


SCHOOL FAILURE
AND LOW TEACHER EXPECTATIONS
"I must be too stupid to learn."
REPEATING A GRADE
"I can't do what other kids can do."
POOR ATTENDANCE (BELOW 85% OF ANY QUARTER)
"School is not for me."
"The school has given up on me."
REPEATING A GRADE
IN-SCHOOL TRUANCY (CUTTING CLASSES, DISRUPTION)
"Teacher's rules are unfair."
OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS
"I don't belong in school."
Student Disengagement and Alienation

Dropping Out: What the Research Says, Wheelock, Anne, Equity and Choice/Fall 1986

Intermittent Learners

Pushouts

Stopouts

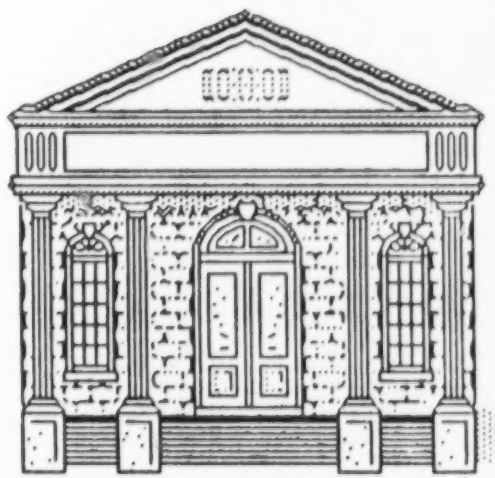
Truants

Leftouts

Expelled

Early School Leavers

Suspended



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Identifying Students At Risk - A check list

A. Student Factors

_____ below grade level (reading, mathematics, English)
_____ frequent truancy (unexcused absences)
_____ transfer from other school/system
_____ been retained a grade (two grades "high" risk)
_____ social immaturity
_____ skips classes
_____ verbal deficiency
_____ frequent visits to school nurse/health problems
_____ rebellious toward authority
_____ not liked by peers
_____ little or no extra-curricular participation
_____ gifted/talented, bored with school
_____ low self esteem
_____
_____

B. Home/Family Community Factors

_____ low income/economic problems (unemployed member)
_____ alcohol/substance abuse
_____ single parent
_____ recent divorce or separation
_____ non-English speaking parents
_____ child abuse (sexual, psychological, physical)
_____ recent loss of family member (death, incarceration, etc.)
_____ low parental education level(s)
_____ transient home pattern
_____ older siblings, dropouts
_____ contacts with police
_____ outside job over 20 hours per week
_____ "latch key" child
_____
_____

C. School Factors

_____ high pupil ratios
_____ facility inappropriate to flexibility
_____ staff attitude
_____ lack of services
_____ school policies/practices
_____
_____

GUIDELINES

FOR

ALTERNATIVE

EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education

GUIDELINES FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION SCHOOLS (PROGRAMS)

DEFINITION - Alternative Education

"An education program that embraces subject matter and/or teaching methodology that is not generally offered to students of the same age or grade level in traditional school settings, which offers a range of educational options and includes the student as an integral part of the planning team."

To some, the act of creating an alternative school is in itself an attack on the venerable and vulnerable traditions of education, because it implies that the system is not adequately serving all students and that perhaps there exists something more desirable. Superintendents are products of the traditional system, and their feelings that it has served them well make them reluctant to accept and adapt to change. Effective change requires a receptiveness and willingness to try the untried, as well as the development of a new pattern of response on the part of those persons initiating or affected by alternatives in education.

In summary, alternative education provides a more personalized atmosphere through individualized program options; allows for more balance between cognitive and affective learning; and facilitates shared decision-making among school administrators, teachers, parents and students.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM OPTION

Program Elements

To be effective, alternative programs must have certain elements over and above the provision of subject matter and special teaching strategies.

- **An environment of caring and acceptance** - an informal atmosphere, wherein the teacher is in control at all times. Many of the students are bright, understand the concept of "rights" and have difficulty handling the strict rules of a large school which may seem meaningless to them. Some students need a more personalized experience to learn the responsibilities and respect for others that go with individual rights.

- **Individualized instruction** - the curriculum must be based on the proficiencies established by the school district. It should be tailored to students' learning needs and interests, with clear learning goals, specific objectives and an individually paced learning program specified for each student.

- **Reward system** - rewards for individual improvement in academic competency and positive classroom behavior should be clear, realistic, attainable and contingent upon student effort and proficiency.

- **Goal oriented work and learning emphasis in the classroom** - alternative programs must provide clear standards of achievement and create a "work and learning"atmosphere with classes structured so that students' attention and effort are clearly focused on developing cognitive skills and attaining educational goals.

Conducive physical and human factors which include:

a. Small student population in the program - students are more likely to establish informal personal relationships with teachers, personal attachments among themselves and commitments to the school (program). These personal relationships often enhance self esteem and constrain negative behavior patterns.

b. Low student ratio in the classroom - a small number of students provides teachers with greater opportunity to relate to students as individuals, to provide individual attention to their learning needs and to establish positive relationships with them. Although an optimal "student-teacher" ratio has not been established, a ratio of no more than 15 to 1 should be sought. The use of community resources, parents and volunteers to supplement the teaching staff should be considered.

c. Caring, competent teachers - the most important characteristic is a combination of genuine interest in working with troubled students, patience and determination, flexibility and adaptability to different students. Teachers' personal characteristics and teaching styles are important for establishing mutual respect with students who have become alienated from traditional schools and classrooms.

d. Strong, supportive administration - strong leadership, consistency, and fairness appear to be more important than a particular administrative or management style. The school administrator must set the "climate" which leads to academic success for students, establishes respect for students, and results in fair and consistent discipline procedures.

- **Student and parent involvement in program decision making:** This approach has been advocated to increase attachment and commitment to school, to prevent delinquency and to ensure active involvement.

- **Supplemental social services:** Support services are vital such as counseling and home school contact, specifically tailored to facilitate student adjustment and educational success.

- **Experiential education:** Experiential activities both within and outside of the classroom engage students with a wider variety of learning opportunities. These activities are planned for and with each student. These strategies are part of the alternative curriculum and widen the possibilities of success in different circumstances and situations for students at risk.

- **Peer counseling:** Can provide an opportunity for students to break free of deviant values and negative identity patterns established in traditional peer pressure situations. Proper training and selection of peer counselors is necessary if this component is included in the program. The potential for success is greater when appropriate staff support is given to peer counselors.

- **Student selection criteria and procedures:** A clear and well defined screening process is essential for success. Student selection should not be based only on referral by a teacher or administrator as a result of nonconforming school behavior. To avoid having the alternative school become a "dumping ground" or contribute to the social segregation of students, criteria and procedures should be developed which require a team approach.

- **Location:** The relative merits of different locations for alternative programs need to be carefully weighed. Separate facilities may encourage attachment to the alternative school but can also become dumping grounds for troublesome students; school-within-schools may facilitate return to regular classes but may increase the negative labeling experienced by participants; and schools-without-walls may fail to provide students with a sense of belonging. Location should be decided with regard to the overall purpose and goals of the program and within the guidelines established by the school district.

- **Learning models:** Different learning approaches and environments may work better for students with different learning styles and abilities. Approaches which match students to learning environments must be considered.

- **Alternatives for elementary grade students:** Alternative education approaches for primary grade students with academic difficulties or behavioral problems hold long term promise for prevention of future delinquency and academic failure. Current research models suggest developmental curricula, reduction of "pullouts," use of older student helpers and/or tutors, coupled with strengthening parent- school-student bonds can be highly effective in meeting the needs of students at risk within their natural environments.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

a. Contact the Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education at the Department of Education for current policies and resources at the outset of your planning.

b. Establish an internal advisory group of professional to begin the student needs analysis necessary for identifying students "at-risk".

c. Request administrative support at the outset based on the information provided in the needs analysis in step b and recommended target priorities.

d. Identifying appropriate planning activities for program development listing resources needed to accomplish the task.

e. Present a plan for school board approval and a timeline for completion of a final recommendation.

f. Send a copy of your preliminary plan to the Office for preliminary review and comment.

g. Use your Dropout Prevention Committee as an advisory committee for the program.

h. Final approval by the local school board or governing board is necessary along with establishment of written policy guidelines, for receiving the Department's recognition of your program in its' directories and/or newsletters.

FORMAL APPROVAL PROCEDURES (VOLUNTARY)

1. A school unit which desires to establish an alternative program may follow these procedures:

   a. A program description and rationale of the learning needs, behavior problems and/or the educational interests and community concerns to be addressed by the alternative program.

   b. The proposed staffing, curriculum and courses of study approved by the local board of education.

      i. A description of the curriculum and educational procedures to be used. Your plan should indicate how the curriculum will relate to local proficiencies for each curricular area.

ii. A list of staff who will be involved in the program, the extent of their involvement and their areas of certification.

iii. An explanation of the out of school work and/or study and experiential program components, if any, proposed as part of the alternative program offerings.

c. Proposed facilities to house the alternative program. Structures other than those meeting specification standards for regular instructional facilities must be approved in accordance with appropriate regulations under Chapter 125, Section 125.10.

d. An explanation of how non-certificated community resource persons will be used for helping students learn. The use of uncertificated community resource persons as a valuable supplemental adjunct is encouraged with alternative programs so long as their work is supervised by a certified instructor and approved by the principal.

e. A description of the program monitoring procedures for the supervision and evaluation of the alternative program which outlines the responsibilities of the administrator, supervisory and instructional staff, including community resource persons when used. Certificated teachers shall have overall responsibility for the educational program and shall regularly monitor classroom instructional activities, and confer with the community resource persons. They shall also assign course credit and grades with the advice of the appropriate community resource persons subject to the school principal in accordance with board policy.

2. Upon approval of the operations of an alternative school or program, the superintendent shall periodically submit to the Commissioner or her designee progress reports for that school pursuant to the required goals, standards, guidelines, and procedures of evaluation set forth.

3. A school unit considering the establishment of an alternative school or the modification of an established alternative school will be provided assistance in the development or modification of an appropriate alternative educational program on request from the Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education.

The Alternative Education Plan (AEP)

1. A specific alternative education plan (AEP) should be prepared for each student which should include:

   a. A description of the pupil's educational performance including academic achievement and vocational aspirations.

   b. A description of the program recommended to meet the pupil's needs.

   c. A statement explaining the rationale which supports this program option.

   d. A statement of the goals and objectives which describe the educational performance expected to be achieved through the program and a timetable for completion.

   e. A statement indicating what curriculum proficiencies will be met by satisfactory completion of the program goals and objectives. It should also include the number of credits that will be earned in a given curricular area for each aspect of the educational experience(s) included in the plan.

   f. A description of the assessment procedure that will be used to determine whether the specific instructional objectives, performance expectations and curriculum proficiencies have been met.

2. The credit awarded under this option should be based on demonstrated outcomes rather than on time spent in learning. Minimum performance expectations must be established to assure that the program requirements have been met.

3. The program should be developed in consultation with the principal, counselor, teacher, pupil, parent and other staff members who know the pupil's educational performance. The coordinator of cooperative education should be included in planning programs that have a work-related component.

4. The program should be under the supervision of a certified teaching staff member.

5. Alternative Educational Plans should be kept on file in the local school district subject to review by the Department of Education as part of regular school approval, or selected program reviews.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As indicated above, parents should be encouraged to participate in the program planning process, because a student's difficulty with the school program also causes disruption and concern for the family, and because continuity between home and school is positively associated with a student's academic success. Thus, a parent participation section should be included as part of the individualized program plan in which the parent agrees to participate in and support the alternative education program. A suggested agreement might contain the following:

As a parent I agree to:

- discuss with my child his/her school activities regularly.
- find out how my child is progressing by attending scheduled conferences or initialing meetings whenever needed.
- create a climate at home that supports school (curfews, TV viewing, school attendance, etc.)
- encourage good study and reading habits at home.

Programs for parents could include some or all of the following:

- courses, workshops and services on parenting and parenting-adolescent communication.
- establishment of parent volunteer/aide and tutor programs which may be operated in the classroom, after school, or in the evening.
- development of parent rap groups and family resource centers.
- study groups for parents on specific basic skills areas.
- creation of a Parent and Citizen Advisory Council that integrates relevant community resources and
- involves groups of parents in implementing the school's alternative program.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Student participation in the planning process and involvement in decision-making help assure program success, since participation generates a sense of responsibility for achieving the agreed-upon objectives.

Students must be encouraged to examine their particular learning needs, interests and problems; must be helped to choose a course of action that will lead to fulfillment of their goals and aspirations; and must recognize their responsibilities for their own actions and the resulting consequences.

While the overall curricular areas have been set by the credit year requirements established by the state, much flexibility exists. Proficiencies for each curriculum area are locally determined, allowing a wide variety of subject matter to be included, with many different approaches and activities. Thus, students are allowed some choice in selecting one approach over another or one area of study over another within the same discipline. Such planning is the mutual responsibility of the students, their parents and the professionals involved in guiding the process. Therefore, a student participation section should be included as a specific component of the individualized program plan. A suggested agreement might contain the following:

As a student I agree to:

- attend school/class regularly.
- come to school/class on time.
- come to school/class prepared to work (with proper materials, homework assignments, etc.)
- come to school ready to learn (well rested, free from the influence of dangerous substances.)
- use the facilities, equipment, materials, etc, in the way they were intended to be used (don't destroy or deface.)
- learn and follow the school/class rules.
- participate in class discussion, school activities, etc.
- make a legitimate effort to learn.
- make an effort to cooperate in maintaining a safe and pleasant school environment.
- respect the rights of other students to learn.
- respect the rights of teachers to teach.

In addition, special program components should involve student participation such as:

- choosing area of study and approaches to be used.
- peer tutoring and counseling.
- regular family meetings to establish sense of community and deal with problems.
- student effectiveness training.

Student participation should also be sought in the determination of school rules and codes of conduct.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

- Evaluation and assessment must be an integral part of dropout prevention programs. Continuous ongoing monitoring activities by administrators, teachers and advisory council members can provide vital evidence for rational decision-making. Prevention programs are not static in nature. Activity plans are flexible and when evidence is provided changes must be made.

- Indicators of program success must be collected, analyzed and shared with school boards, parents and other community persons. These indicators must be quantifiable and understandable to program planners and public policy makers. Both aggregated (group) and disaggregated data about students can provide valuable information about a program's success.

- Evaluation is not a single event. It is a series of activities that take place during a school year in order to produce valid results that can be presented in a summative report.

- Consideration should be given to using an external evaluator or consultant for developing your evaluation plan with you. Policy makers, planners and those who will implement your program must answer questions such as "What are the purposes in evaluating?" "What will be evaluated?" "When will we collect data, etc.?" It may prove more effective (if the budget allows) to use the services of a professional consultant to help you outline your strategies and evaluation plan and to monitor your activities in this regard. A few extra dollars spent in this manner can be beneficial when school boards and others are asked to provide increased funds for your program.

COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAMS

1. Planning efforts must be comprehensive K-12.

2. Early intervention strategies for identified high risk students.

3. Collaborative efforts with parents, community and business must increase.

4. Teach skills that can be transferred to work situations and which build on basic academic competencies.

5. Include an advisory committee with a community-wide focus.

6. Provide flexibility in curriculum framework to meet individual student needs.

7. Leadership support must be evident at all levels, including the school board.

8. A well-defined continuous evaluation system.

EVALUATION MODEL FOR A SERVICE PROJECT

Model:

Goal-oriented Evaluation (Bloom, Provus)

Evaluation:

- Assesses program effects
- Assesses effectiveness of services provided
- Describes changes that can be attributed to program activities
- Assesses program's success in achieving desired outcomes

Questions to ask yourself:

- What do participants *know* now that they did not know before their involvement in the program?
- What *attitudes* has the program modified?
- What do participants *do* now that they could not do before their involvement in the program?

Action steps:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Critically examine program's major goals Conduct needs assessment	State program objectives in terms of desired outcomes	Find out as much as you can about the program Activities: frequency, duration, special features Target population: number, age, characteristics, needs, attrition Staff: characteristics, roles, responsibilities	Collect data to determine whether objectives were attained Develop data collection plan: *when*, *how* data will be collected, by *whom*, and *who* the respondents are Develop/select instruments Administer instruments Score instruments	Analyze data	Write final report Describe program's goals and objectives; data collection methods and timelines; instrument selection/ development; include copies of all instruments; data analysis procedures; report findings and make recommendations

Bloom, B.S., J.T. Hastings, and G.F. Madaus. *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

Provus, M. *Discrepancy Evaluation for Educational Program Improvement and Assessment*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan, 1971.

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PARENT

SCHOOL

PARTNERSHIPS

PARENTS: A RESOURCE FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN

I. The Need for Parent Involvement

"A strong partnership between the home and school is needed if quality education is to be provided to all children. Parents and teachers, by working together, can reinforce each other's efforts. Without this cooperation, neither the parent nor the teacher can be fully effective."[1]

Research has shown that parents and family are critical factors in children's education, particularly for those who are at risk of dropping out of school. Numerous studies demonstrate that the influence and support given by the family may directly impact the behavior of children in school, their grades, and the probability that they will finish high school.

Changing family structures have affected the impact parents can have on children's educational experiences. The support role traditionally played by the family – supervising homework, monitoring progress, arranging family life so children are prepared for school (sufficient sleep, proper meals, etc.), assuring school attendance, maintaining communications with the school, and participating in school activities – is now often assumed by one person rather than two. Studies have indicated that children from single-parent homes are twice as likely to drop out of school than students living with both parents (Neill, 1979).

Researcher Herbert Walberg states: "Extensive evidence suggests that the efficiency of the home in fostering learning has declined for several decades, but cooperative partnerships between the home and the school can dramatically raise education productivity." This paper examines the home-school relationship and how parents can be involved in reducing the risk of school failure.

Research indicates that children who are at risk generally come from a home with a weaker educational support system. Even "highly conscientious students with good abilities might have special educational needs if they came from educationally disadvantaged families." (Levin 1986) It has been determined by looking at data from a number of surveys, that dropouts tend to come from the following type of home background (Cipollone, 1986):

- large family structure
- single-parent family (usually female-headed)
- parents, as well as older siblings, are likely to have dropped out of school
- families have low aspirations for their children
- family income below poverty level
- child abuse and neglect problems in the family
- lack of English-speaking home environment

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[1] Parent Participation for Effective Schools: Planning for Parent Involvement. Arizona Department of Education. 1986.

Therefore, educators not only need to formulate strategies for dealing with at-risk youth, but their families also.

II. Involving Parents of At-Risk Youth

There are positive correlations between school staff and parents working together and increased student achievement. Guiding principles for parent involvement in schools include:

- Parents have a clear understanding of school goals through frequent communication.
- The school shares with parents ways they can help meet school goals.
- There are structured ways for parents to give input into school goals and decisions.
- The school provides many opportunities for parents and community members to participate in school functions and activities.
- Parents are given opportunities to design and participate in parent education programs.
- Parents are given complete information on their child's progress, including results in statewide tests, and whether or not the child is reading at, below, or above grade level.
- Multiple means are used to communicate with parents, including handbooks, newsletter (both school and grade level), notes home, telephone calls, parent/teacher conferences, home visits, home learning packets, and school and class meetings.
- Parent organizations are encouraged and supported, are provided with a meeting room, are kept well-informed about the instructional program and school-wide progress, and are given an opportunity to share in important school decisions.
- Parents are encouraged to observe their child's classroom.
- Parents are given information on how to help their children at home.

"When it comes to learning, the school is an extension of the family. A child's parents provide the motivation, values, and positive environment that increases academic performance. A child's chances of getting the most from education is greatly determined by the support and encouragement they get at home."

Governor Michael N. Castle
Time for Results: The Governor's 1991 Report on Education

III. Types of Parent Involvement

Herrick and Owens developed a continuum of types of parent involvement: home-school communication; parents as supporters of school activities; parents as learners; parents as teachers; parents as educational advocates/decision-makers. Research has shown that communications, parents as learners, and parents as teachers are the types of involvement most likely to impact student achievement (Chrispeels and Meaney, 1985). The following chart displays these categories, giving examples of typical parent involvement activities.

Parent Involvement Continuum

Home-School Communication	Parents as Supporters of School Activities	Parents as Learners	Parents as Teachers	Parents as Educational Advocates/Decision-Makers
(ACTIVE) **Information Collaborator** • Check and sign homework • Receive home visits from teachers • Call homework hotline • Attend parent-teacher conference	**Organizer** • Fund raise • Chaperone field trips • Organize school functions • Be a room mother	**Workshop Participant** • Attend educational meetings on school program & curriculum • Make classroom observations • Attend parent education workshops	**Instructor** • Tutoring at home • Teaching home • Enrichment activities • Classroom volunteer aide • Paid paraprofessional in classroom	**Advocate** • Organize community meetings • Write or send position letters • Speak at community, school, district meetings on educational issues
(PASSIVE) **Information Recipient** • Read success reports from teacher • Read academic progress reports • Read school newsletter	**Audience** • Attend open house • Attend special performances • Attend Back-to-School Nites • Attend Family Nites • Attend award assemblies	**Home Learner** • Read home learning suggestions sent by school • Read information on community resources for parent-child activities • Read parenting books	**Home Learning Facilitator** • Listen to child read • Read to child • Monitor homework • Provide incentives • Take child to library • Facilitate family discussion • Provide learning enrichment activities • Model educational pursuits	**Decision-Maker** • Give opinions on a survey • Participate on PTA • Participate on SIP advisory committee • Participate on district community board

IV. Planning for Parent Involvement

It often falls to the school to reach out and get parents involved. Schools should plan parent involvement activities, considering goals, resources, and local conditions. Goals of parent involvement (Arizona Department of Education, 1986) include:

- **Increased awareness and understanding of school matters**
- **Improved student achievement**
- **Improved school-home-community relations**
- **Increased support for schools**
- **Increased public ownership of schools**
- **Improved staff morale**
- **Increased public involvement in educational decision-making**

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A typical planning process for parent involvement includes the following steps (Lowrey, 1984):

Analyzing

- Survey community attitudes and interests.
- Learn as much as you can about key people, procedures, problems, programs, and policies.
- Determine how parents are currently involved in your schools.
- Identify new ways parents can be involved.

Action-Planning

- Develop a comprehensive parent involvement policy.
- Prepare a parent involvement plan that outlines goals, objectives and strategies.
- Set priorities.
- Determine resources needed to supplement the existing channels for parent involvement.
- Analyze and develop new channels. Establish a procedure for using them effectively.
- Get community members involved in the planning.

Implementing

- Target programs to different audiences, making sure you tailor them to meet different needs.
- Get school staff involved. Make them aware that parent involvement is a school priority.
- Set timelines and meet them. Make everyone aware of deadlines and goals so as to work within those parameters.
- Find ways to highlight parent involvement in newsletters, news articles, recognition programs, and other communications avenues.

Evaluating

- Listen. What is being said and how are people reacting to your communications efforts?
- Survey. Ask people, through structured means, their opinions and reactions to what you have been doing.
- React to the feedback you obtain. Is it justified? What does it tell you about the effectiveness of your program? How can you use this feedback to improve your program?
- Be honest with yourself. Are you accomplishing your objectives? Are you using your goals to chart your course?

V. Benefits and Limitations of Parent Involvement

When considering parent involvement, it is important to have realistic expectations. Some benefits (Chrispeels and Meaney) and limitations (Novak and Dougherty) of parent involvement are outlined below:

Benefits:

To students:

1. Increased achievement.
2. Students see that education is important to their parents, and they, therefore, value it more.
3. They receive evidence of their parent's interest in them, which builds self-confidence.
4. Closer rapport is developed among student, teacher, and parents.
5. Behavior is improved.
6. The teacher's understanding of students's needs, abilities, and interests is increased.
7. Gives what goes on in school a closer relationship to life situations, needs, and problems.

To teachers:

1. Provide additional information about each child; get another perspective on the child.
2. Helps open communication channels between parents and teachers; clears up misunderstandings.
3. Gain a broader base of support for the school, becaused of increased understanding.
4. Draw upon supplemental and unique adult resources.

To parents:

1. Reinforce what is being taught in school.
2. Receive encouragement to become partners with teachers in the education of the child.
3. Understand expectations of the school relative to the child's learning.
4. May develop more consistency in discipline of the child.
5. Obtain a more well-rounded view of the child.
6. See the process used by the teacher; gain insight into what is actually happening in the classroom.
7. Feel more comfortable in their local schools.
8. Become acquainted with goals and aims of the school.

Limitations:

1. Even though a majority of parents want to help their children, some parents are unable or unwilling to participate in a parent involvement approach for a variety of reasons. Parents may be unwilling to encourage their children in school because they see little value in education, or fear the schools will rob their children of their heritage, culture, and language. Some parents may need their older children to work to help support the family. Other parents may be unable to participate because of intellectual, emotional, physical, or time constraints.

2. Some children do not want their parents involved. A few of these children are so antagonistic toward their parents that any attempt to involve parents in a dropout prevention effort will only prompt resistance and other negative behavior.

3. Some home visitors and/or program staff can do more harm than good. Many parents already feel threatened or unduly criticized. Being told once again that their child's problems are their fault will not encourage cooperation. Similarly, a condescending attitude on the part of school personnel regarding lifestyles, values, or parenting ability can destroy hope for a productive partnership.

VI. Successful Parent Involvement Programs

Two examples of successful parent involvement programs from the region are:

EPIC (Effective Parenting Information for Children)
Buffalo, New York

Parental involvement is one of the three significant dimensions in a rapidly growing program designed to join the home, school, and community in a mutually supportive cause to help prepare students to become responsible adults. EPIC offers workshops for the parents or guardians of children throughout the community. Parents have an opportunity to share concerns and problems about their children, while at the same time strengthening their parenting skills with assistance from home volunteers.

LULAC Educational Service Center for Hispanic Families
New Haven, Connecticut

The goal of this program is to reduce the dropout rate and increase educational attainment level of Hispanic middle and high school students. The Center implements four educational support and dropout prevention programs:

1. Educational support and youth development
2. Family advocacy and employability
3. Parent organizing and parent involvement
4. Educational talent search

VII. Conclusions

Research allows us to readily identify the parent and family factors that contribute to making a child at risk. Research also allows us to identify those meaningful and important ways that parents and families can contribute to children's educational success. The school must look to parents as resources, and it must consider creative methods for reaching out and addressing the needs of at-risk youth within the contemporary family structure.

BUSINESS

SCHOOL

PARTNERSHIPS

THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN DROPOUT PREVENTION
BUSINESS AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

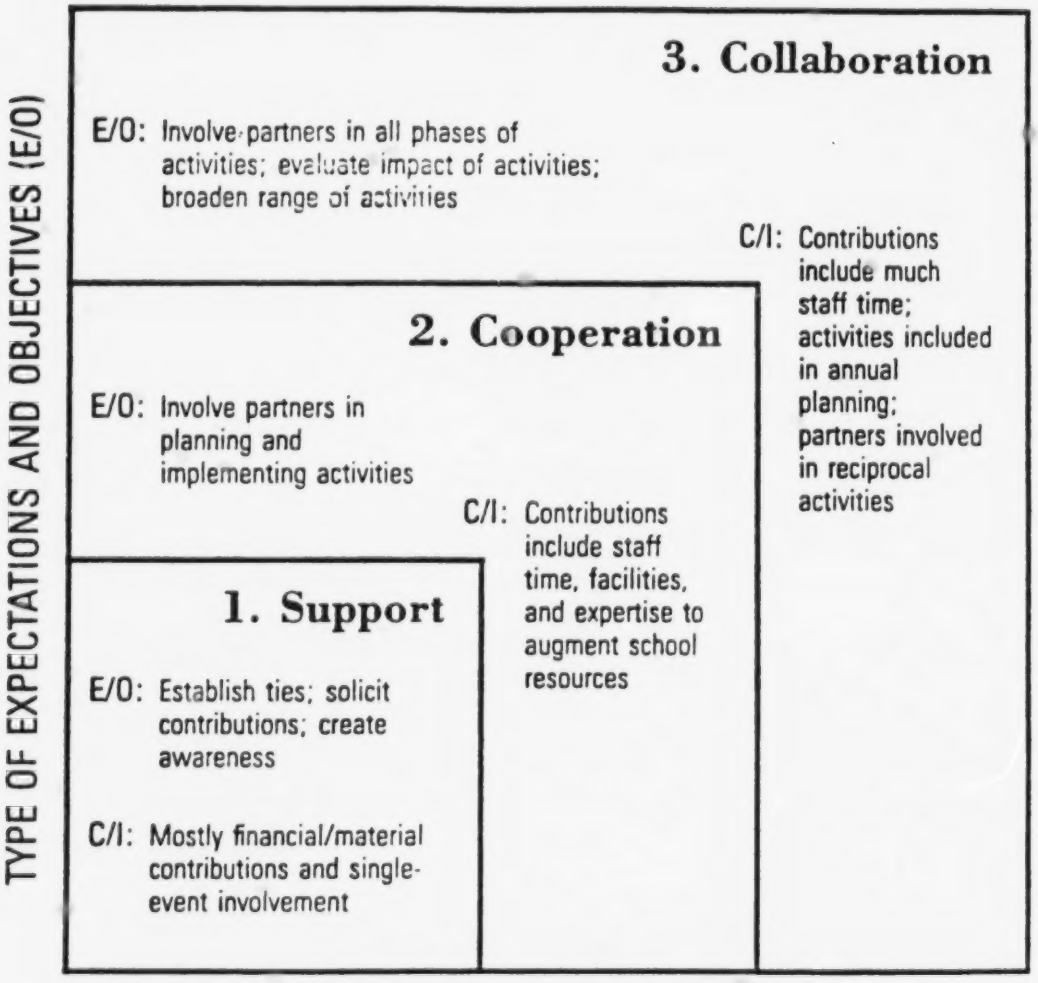
Maine business has a major stake and role to play in the improvement of our public schools. Better schools can mean better and more productive employees and a boost toward restoring the nation's international competitiveness.

There are many things Maine businesses can do to improve public education. Among them are:

- Working with local schools to define mutual goals based on mutual needs
- Engaging in local business-school partnerships
- Encouraging employees to serve on local school boards and adult and community education advisory committees.
- Expanding summer employment opportunities for Maine youth
- Advocating completing of the high school diploma as a job entry requirement
- Helping redirect vocational education programs to provide students with strong academic and real job-related skills
- Allowing release time for parents (employees) involvement with home-school activities
- Establishing regional business-school informational forums for improvement of programs for all students

A partnership is needed to combat our state's dropout problem. No single institution created the dilemma we face today, both nationally and in our state. No single institution can cure it alone. The public and the private sector working collaboratively with well defined goals can direct their mutual interests, talents and resources on the dropout issue.

FIGURE 1. THREE STAGES OF PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT


3. Collaboration
E/O: Involve partners in all phases of activities; evaluate impact of activities; broaden range of activities
C/I: Contributions include much staff time; activities included in annual planning; partners involved in reciprocal activities
2. Cooperation
E/O: Involve partners in planning and implementing activities
C/I: Contributions include staff time, facilities, and expertise to augment school resources
1. Support
E/O: Establish ties; solicit contributions; create awareness
C/I: Mostly financial/material contributions and single-event involvement
TYPE OF EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES (E/O)
LEVEL OF COMMITMENT/INVOLVEMENT (C/I)

From: Business Education Partnerships: Strategies for School Improvement, The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1986.

FIGURE 2.

HOW STAGES VARY BY KEY DIMENSIONS

Dimensions	Stage 1: Support	Stage 2: Cooperation	Stage 3: Collaboration
AMOUNT AND TYPE OF RESOURCES	Resources usually consist of financial support for equipment, uniforms, awards, etc.	Wide range of human, financial, and physical resources for specific activities.	Long-range (1–2 year) commitments from managers and staff from both partners working on fairly large-scale projects.
TYPE OF ACTIVITIES	Partnership activities involve short-term single events such as award nights.	Activities provide students and teachers with new or additional experience (e.g., training, fellowships, shadowing); business employees actually involved in activities (e.g., executives-on-loan, mentor programs, use of facilities).	Activities longer-term, larger-scale (e.g., curriculum development); education partners engaged in activities designed to meet need of business partner (e.g., basic skills remediation).
PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING	Business minimally involved; representatives may serve an advisory role; educators request support for activities through departments such as Corporate Giving, Community Relations, or Sales and Marketing.	One or more business representatives involved in most planning and decision making; partners also share responsibility for evaluating partnership; management structure allows for some autonomy of team in planning specific activities.	Team members share all planning and decision-making responsibilities; team has considerable autonomy in setting agenda and goals, operating with little direct oversight from administrators/supervisors.
EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION	Infrequent direct communication at executive level; communication occurs through representative from particular department within company (e.g., sales) and a program coordinator, principal, or teacher.	Regular communication occurs and is concentrated between the primary contacts designated by the cooperating organizations; within organizations, participants share information across all levels.	Many levels of communication are established, frequent interactions at all levels across both partner organizations occur formally and informally.
COMMITMENT/LEADERSHIP FROM TOP MANAGEMENT/ ADMINISTRATION	Little demonstrable leadership, especially from business partner; commitment characterized by giving administrative approval for activities and resources.	Superintendent involved and may participate in planning and decision making; chief administrators publicize partnership activity and promote support of partnership to school board or executive staff.	In addition to active support and involvement, leaders demonstrate through example a commitment to collaboration.
"EQUALITY" OF PARTNERS	Business plays role of philanthropist, with school seen as "poor relation"; schools almost exclusively on the receiving end.	Schools are the recipients of most benefits, but business employees experience personal satisfaction; partners share in coordination, planning, and implementation of activities.	Partners share strong feeling of equality in involvement and responsibility; function as problem-solving team.
STAFF PARTICIPATION	Few staff involved—one or two teachers or an administrator, with a few employees/managers from business; rewards and incentives for those involved are not compelling.	Staff involved at various levels, with a partnership coordinator/liaison overseeing activities and having primary responsibility.	Staff from all levels involved; several projects may occur simultaneously; members demonstrate commitment by contributing time and human resources; team members have vested interest and can initiate activities independent of team.

From: Business Education Partnerships: Strategies for School Improvement, The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1986.

STEPS FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Make contact with potential partners
2. Involve a team of planners and doers
3. Integrate your partnership with other improvement efforts
4. Develop an Action Plan
5. Implement the plan
6. Maintain the partnership
7. Evaluate your success
8. Expand partnership activity

From: Business Education Partnerships: Strategies for School Improvement, The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1986.

MAINE ASPIRATIONS FOUNDATION

What is the Maine Aspirations Foundation?

The mission of the Maine Aspirations Foundation is to raise the aspirations of all Maine youth by:

- increasing their personal expectations;
- expanding their career, educational and personal choices; and
- improving their academic performance and the achievement of other learning outcomes.

The Foundation believes that this requires a long-term commitment and, in some cases, fundamental changes in schools and other community institutions in support of youth. Educators, business people, community leaders and others must work together as partners to lead their communities in efforts to raise aspirations.

The Foundation will accomplish its mission by facilitating the development of sustainable and effective local partnerships through the provision of training, technical assistance, and limited financial support.

* * * * * *

The Maine Aspirations Foundation is a private, non-profit corporation established in 1989 with a generous gift from L.L. Bean. Since then, the Foundation has received financial support from nearly 50 other Maine companies and individuals to assist local partnerships in their efforts to raise the aspirations of Maine youth. The Foundation's nine-member Board of Directors includes leaders from Maine state government and from the state's business and educational communities. The Maine Aspirations Foundation in administered by the Maine Development Foundation.

How does the Foundation help communities raise student aspirations?

Partnerships

The Maine Aspirations Foundation provides technical and limited financial assistance to communities who are working to establish local aspirations partnerships. These partnerships, which are comprised of business people, educators, community leaders, parents, and students, strive to help youth achieve their aspirations and to establish supportive home, school, and community environments.

The focus of each local effort reflects the unique needs and concerns of the community. For example, the Lewiston/Auburn partnership has created a mentoring program for young children. In the Buxton area, academic coaching and tutoring are combined with a challenging outdoor experience for 7th and 8th grade students. In Deer Isle-Stonington, an alternative program is successfully keeping students in high school by providing a more individualized educational experience.

One of the Foundation's key objectives it to help communities build on successful projects such as these by initiating systemic change in schools and community organizations that serve youth.

Training

The Foundation also organizes and sponsors training opportunities delivered in different regions around the state. These trainings are designed for anyone who is interested in learning more about raising student aspirations. Special emphasis is placed on forming partnerships to foster fundamental change in schools and other organizations which deliver services to students.

MAINE
ASPIRATIONS
FOUNDATION

45 Memorial Circle • Augusta, Maine 04330 • 207/626-3113 • FAX 207/622-6346
Maine Aspirations Foundation is Administered by the Maine Development Foundation

A Process to Raise Student Aspirations
The Foundation is especially interested in helping communities raise student aspirations by rethinking education in their communities. In April, 1991, UNUM joined with the Foundation and five Maine school districts to foster fundamental change. Each of the five sites--Windham, Winthrop, Waterville, Union 96 (Sullivan area), and SAD 27 (Fort Kent area)--has established an aspirations partnership as a vehicle for developing a vision for education and then planning the steps necessary to turn that vision into reality in their community. The Foundation plans to select five more communities to work with in 1992.

What else does the Foundation do?

Financial Support
Although the focus of the Foundation is on providing technical assistance to partnerships, the Foundation has provided sixteen Maine communities with over $225,000 in direct financial support for innovative aspiration activities.

In addition to working with local partnerships, the Foundation has been instrumental in organizing several other statewide initiatives to raise student aspirations.

Work Advantage
In 1990, the Foundation helped a group of high school principals and business leaders establish a program to ensure that students recognize that school work is their most important job. At the heart of the program, known as "Work Advantage," is a student's career folder consisting of an attendance record, teacher recommendations, course transcripts, and resume. Students are asked to share the file with prospective employers and to sign an agreement limiting work hours. Employers are asked to review student employees' report cards, limit work hours, and give preference to students participating in the program.

CEO/Superintendent Dialogues
Working with the University of Southern Maine and the Maine Development Foundation, the Foundation has helped initiate a series of dialogues between school superintendents and corporate executives. In a pilot project which began in the spring of 1991, thirteen southern Maine superintendents were paired, one-on-one, with their counterparts in business. Corporate executives attended school board meetings and classroom sessions. School chiefs sat in on business meetings. In doing so, each of the participants gained insights into the concerns, needs, and challenges of their partners. In the fall of 1991, the Foundation helped the University of Maine at Farmington expand the program into the western part of the state.

Newsletter
The Foundation publishes a quarterly newsletter which contains information about innovative approaches to raising student aspirations in Maine communities. The goals of the newsletter are to inform readers of exciting new approaches and to serve as a link between the various programs around the state.

Where can I get more information?

The Maine Aspirations Foundation is administered by the Maine Development Foundation. For more information, contact MDF President Henry Bourgeois, MAF Program Director Kim McBride, or MAF Training Coordinator Jan Brackett at (207) 626-3113.

October, 1991

SETTING

A CLIMATE

FOR

SUCCESS

SETTING A SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR SUCCESS

- Many students feel alienated from school. Personal attachment to school is lacking. They also feel as if no one cares and that school is not a pleasant place to be. Many students feel school is not a learning place for them.

- Establishing a positive school and classroom climate is a high priority goal in dropout prevention planning. All staff, at all levels are involved in setting a school climate for success. Effective plans for managing behavior requires that all staff be included in decision-making about students.

- Bonding students to school is often created by participation in sports, clubs and outside of class activities. Yet, it is these same students who are not joiners and are often missing from these activities. School leaders - other students and staff - must make greater efforts to invite students to participate meaningfully in school activities and to create new activities for students.

- Classroom teachers are on the front line of dropout prevention and can make a difference in the classroom. Setting high expectations for all students coupled with your belief in their ability to meet these expectations will yield positive results for all learners. Assuring a basic skill emphasis with a continuous system for monitoring student performance with a constant feedback to both student and parent can develop positive self-esteem in students.

SCHOOL INDICATORS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Meeting the needs of all students to assure success for all requires a conscious attempt to assess the school environment on a continuous basis. In order to achieve this goal, "the school" must not only deliver positive messages to each student, but must also enable each student to be able to receive these messages by benefiting from programs and activities that truly reflect these messages.

What are these messages? A few suggestions are listed below. Your team should add to this list as you continue to work on your school plan.

1. "We care about you and are glad you are here."

2. "We believe you are a capable learner and expect you to take charge of your own learning."

3. "We will provide you with the resources which are necessary to help you learn."

Monitoring the Indicators

As you proceed in your school plan for assuring success for all students, you will need to provide evidence for each message that you wish to send to each student. It may even be appropriate to check for indicators in the behaviors of students, teachers, administrators, parents and citizens.

For example, list some evidence for each of the following indicators:

1. WE CARE ABOUT YOU AND ARE GLAD YOU ARE HERE.

2. WE BELIEVE YOU ARE A CAPABLE LEARNER AND EXPECT YOU TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR OWN LEARNING.

3. WE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH THE RESOURCES WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO HELP YOU LEARN.

IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- Irregular attendance patterns of students effects the overall school and classroom climate dramatically. While not all students have irregular attendance patterns, schools must assertively manage an effective school attendance program.

- Effective school attendance improvement must begin with a commitment from the school. This commitment requires support from the school board, strong administrative leadership and cooperation from parents. A strong "we care" message to students must be expressed behaviorally by teachers with appropriate positive reinforcement to both individual students and groups (classes) of students.

- Truancy reduction is not a popular task. Early identification and intervention, if conducted at the elementary level will help alleviate future problems at the middle and high school levels. Attendance coordinators must work with agencies outside of school as well as school staff. Instilling a message that "students are expected to attend school" must be a constant theme in school-parent relationships.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q. What makes a dropout prevention program effective?

A. The following are some characteristics of effective programs:

- The strategies are comprehensive K-12.
- The students who will be served are only those who are clearly identified.
- Students are invited to join the program and are told why they are being invited and what is expected of them.
- The adults working with the program understand that discipline and responsibility need to be taught to the students, it is not something they can be expected to do automatically.
- The program is an alternative for learning; not an alternative to learning. Actual school work is completed.
- The students feel they are members and are at home with the program location and the other students.
- Intellectual and psychological continuity and cohesion of the learning experiences is achieved whereby students see the relationships of their learning.

Q. What are the characteristics of effective alternative teachers and staff?

A. The following are characteristics of effective alternative teachers and staff:

- Intellectual, emotional and moral toughness.
- Compassion and trust.
- Commitment to the tasks to be done and belief in the students as learners.
- An eclectic teaching style with extreme patience.
- Creativity.
- A balanced sense of confidence and authority.
- Cultural competence and pride in their own cultural heritage.
- A strong sense of self-monitoring to reduce burnout.
- A team worker.

Q. What do students need from adults and alternative programs?

A. The following are needed by students and should be provided by adults in alternative programs:

- Structure and predictability.
- Flexibility and consistency of goals.
- High ethical and intellectual expectations.
- Academic work which is self paced and rigorous.
- Engagement with adults who are trusted and respected as adults.
- Leadership and authority that confronts inappropriate behavior and reinforces appropriate behavior.
- Serious, meaningful and doable learning tasks.
- Trust and compassion.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION AND ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Experiential education is defined by the use of activities outside the classroom and conventional subject matter. Typical activities included under the umbrella of experiential education involve students with community services (volunteering), career internships (job shadowing), political or social action (monitoring a town meeting), community study (inventorying historical sites), and outdoor adventure (Upward Bound). Experiential activities place students with purpose in new roles and provide opportunities for involvement with people and institutions not ordinarily accessible within the traditional curriculum. While educators might refer to these activities as alternatives, many schools include these "experiential" components as part of the school curriculum.

To the extent that these activities become part of the remedy for youth at risk , it is important that they are not accidental, but are planned for and with each student. The powerful educational opportunities gained in experiential learning must be linked with and integrated into the student's individual plan. New roles for the student who may interact with persons of a different age or background or race are powerful learning opportunities. Learning what a person does in a career field not just "how to do it", inquiring into social issues and examining how systems work, achieving some physical accomplishment thought to be impossible, sharing experiences with others to learn trust and cooperation and most importantly, reflecting on these experiences can be the key to unlocking the hidden motivations and frustrations many youth at risk face when in a formal learning environment.

Alternative programs must plan each student's alternative plan with purpose and flexibility. Experiential learning is not just having a job, or spending a day with an auto technician! Experiential education often places the learners in a problem situation where they must use their own ideas, skills and abilities in a creative manner, sometimes alone and sometimes as part of a group. Translation of these experiences into learning credits requires a debriefing activity with the teacher to document the personal growth or lack thereof, thus leading to new experiences including even the required curriculum.

ASSOCIATIONS

and

ORGANIZATIONS

ASSOCIATIONS, National and State

Academy for Educational Development
1255 23rd Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20037
202-862-1900

Adolescent Pregnancy Coalition
74 Winthrop Street
Augusta, Maine 04330
622-5188

Alternative Education Association
340 Foreside Road
Falmouth, Maine 04105
781-5013

Association for Experiential Education
C.V. Box 249
Boulder, Colorado 80309
303-492-1547

Community Training and Assistance Center
105 Beach Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02111
617-423-1444

Council of Chief State School Officers
400 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001-1511

The Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln St., Suite 300
Denver, Colorado 80295
303-830-3692

The Home and School Institute, Inc.
1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-466-3633

Maine Children's Trust Fund
160 Capitol Street
Augusta, Maine 04330
289-2044

National Alliance of Business
1015 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
202-457-0040

National Assoc. of State Boards of Education
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
703-684-4000

The National Center for Research in
Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-9983

National Committee for Citizens in Education
10840 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 301
Columbia, Maryland 21044
301-997-9300

National Dropout Prevention Center
Tillman Hall
Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina 29634-0709
803-656-3482

National Organization on Adolescent
Pregnancy and Parenting, Inc.
P.O. Box 2365
Reston, Virginia 22090

The Regional Laboratory for Educational
Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
300 Brickstone Square, Suite 900
Andover, Massachusetts 01810
508-470-0098

Research for Better Schools
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, PA. 19123-4107

William T. Grant Foundation
1001 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20036-5541

Youth Service America
1319 F Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004
207-783-855

MAINE

STATUTES

AND

RULES

CHAPTER 211
ATTENDANCE

SUBCHAPTER I
ATTENDANCE

20A § 5001-A. Compulsory attendance

Attendance at school shall be required of persons in the State as follows.

1. Requirement. Persons 7 years of age or older and under 17 years shall attend a public day school during the time it is in regular session.

2. Exceptions. Attendance at school shall not be required of the following:

A. A person who graduates from high school before that person's 17th birthday;

B. A person who has:

(1) Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade;

(2) Permission to leave school from that person's parent;

(3) Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;

(4) Permission to leave school from the school board or its designee; and

(5) Agreed in writing with that person's parent and the school board or its designee to meet annually until that person's 17th birthday to review that person's educational needs. When the request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student's parent may appeal to the commissioner;

C. A person whose absence is excused under section 5051. The parent of an habitual truant who has been denied a waiver of this paragraph, may appeal to the commissioner in accordance with section 5051, subsection 2, paragraph E; or

D. A person who has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to attendance in public school under this paragraph must be approved by the commissioner.

3. Alternatives to attendance at public day school. Alternatives to attendance at public day school are as follows.

A. Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows.

(1) A person shall be excused from attending a public day school if the person obtains equivalent instruction in:

(a) A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to section 2901;

(b) A private school recognized by the department as providing equivalent instruction;

(c) A manner approved by the commissioner pursuant to subparagraph (3); or

(d) Any other manner arranged for by the school board and approved by the commissioner.

(2) A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school only if a certificate showing the name, residence and attendance of the person at the school, signed by the person or persons in charge of the school, has been filed with the school officials of the administrative unit in which the student resides.

(3) A person who wishes to obtain approval of equivalent instruction under rules established by the commissioner for equivalent instruction through home instruction shall simultaneously submit a completed application for approval to the local board and to the commissioner. The local board shall provide for review of the application. The purpose of local review shall only be to facilitate cooperation between local educators and students receiving equivalent instruction and to permit local boards and educators to provide initial review of the application for completion of information required by state rules. Within 30 days of receipt of the application, the local board shall submit its comments on the completeness of the application to the commissioner. Within 30 days of receipt of local comments, the commissioner, using state criteria established by rule, shall decide whether to approve the equivalent instruction application. If the commissioner denies the application, the applicant may, within 30 days of receiving the denial, amend and resubmit the application directly to the commissioner. The commissioner shall make a decision within 30 days of receiving the amended application. If the amended application is approved, the applicant shall send a copy of the amended application to the local board for information purposes.

B. A person may be excused from attendance at a public day school pursuant to section 5104-A or section 8605.

C. A student who is educated under the provisions of paragraph A in any manner other than in a private school approved under chapter 117, subchapter I shall be counted as 1/2 a student for the purpose of computing state aid under chapter 606.

4. Excusable absence. A person's absence is excused when the absence is for the following reasons:

A. Personal illness;

B. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;

C. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;

D. A family emergency; or

E. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose which has been approved.

5. Adult responsibility. An adult having a person of compulsory school age under that adult's control shall cause the person to attend school as provided in this section.

6. Repealed.

7. Purpose. Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our society and our nation. Maintaining regular student attendance is necessary to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry. Public schools should ensure the rights of access for all school-age persons to an appropriate educational opportunity and, when necessary, should develop alternatives to regular school curricula for those children and youth at risk of becoming dropouts and those who may have left school.

20A § 5003. Administration

1. School board's responsibility. School boards shall administer this chapter.

2. Rules. School boards shall adopt rules to carry out this chapter and shall file a copy with the commissioner.

3. Commissioner's responsibility. The commissioner shall guide school boards in adopting these rules.

SUBCHAPTER II
HABITUAL TRUANTS

20A § 5051. Habitual truancy

1. Definition. A student is habitually truant if the student:

A. Is subject to section 5001-A; and

B. Has attained the equivalent of 10 full days of nonexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of nonexcused absences during a school year.

2. Procedures. The following provisions govern the procedure to be followed when a student is habitually truant.

A. If a principal of a public school and the attendance coordinator determines that a student is habitually truant, the principal shall inform the superintendent. The superintendent shall first try to correct the problem informally.

A-1. As part of the informal measures set out in paragraph A, the superintendent may ask the student's parents to attend a series of meetings with their child's teacher or other school personnel designated by the superintendent. The purpose of the meetings is to describe the education program to the parents and explain the value of their child attending school. The superintendent shall arrange meeting times convenient to the parents.

B. If the principal and the attendance coordinator are unable to correct the problem, the superintendent shall refer the matter to the school board along with the attendance coordinator's report, the principal's report and any other useful information.

C. The school board shall call a hearing and shall notify the student's parent of the following in writing at least 7 days in advance:

(1) The date and time of the hearing;

(2) The purpose of the hearing;

(3) The parent's right to inspect the student's attendance records, attendance coordinator's report and principal's reports; and

(4) The necessity of the parent's and student's presence at the hearing.

D. If the school board determines that the student is habitually truant, it shall either:

(1) Instruct the student to attend school as required by section 5001-A and advise the parents of their responsibility under section 5001-A, subsection 5 to assure the student's attendance; or

(2) Waive the requirements of section 5001-A, if the student is 15 years of age or older.

E. A parent may appeal to the commissioner the decision of the school board which denies to a student who is habitually truant and at least 15 years old a waiver of section 5001-A.

(1) The commissioner shall appoint a fair hearing officer to hear the appeal.

(2) The fair hearing officer shall report to the commissioner on the testimony presented and shall recommend a disposition to the commissioner.

(3) The commissioner shall review the report and shall affirm, modify or reverse the school board's decision on a waiver of section 5001-A.

3. **Reports.** The following provisions apply to reports.

A. A superintendent shall submit an annual report to the commissioner before October 1st. The report shall:

(1) Identify the number of habitual truants in the unit in the preceding school year;

(2) Describe the unit's efforts to deal with habitual truancy;

(3) Account for actions brought under this section; and

(4) Include any other information on truancy requested by the commissioner.

B. The commissioner shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature before January 15th. The report shall aggregate the information provided by superintendents and shall evaluate the effect of state laws on the incidence of truancy.

20A § 5052-A. Attendance coordinators

The following provisions apply to attendance coordinators.

1. **Election.** The following provisions apply to the election of attendance coordinators.

A. A school board shall elect an attendance coordinator or coordinators.

B. Vacancies shall be filled as they occur.

2. **Qualifications.** An attendance coordinator shall be a professionally certified or registered person in the mental health, social welfare or educational system who is qualified to carry out the duties in accordance with rules to be established by the State Board of Education.

3. **Duties.** The duties of an attendance coordinator shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

A. When notified by a principal that a student's attendance is irregular, interviewing the student and the parent or parents or guardian or guardians to determine the cause of the irregular attendance and file a written report with the principal;

B. Filing an annual report with the superintendent summarizing school year activities, findings and recommendations regarding truants; and

C. Serving as a member of the dropout prevention committee in accordance with section 5103.

4. **Department assistance.** The department shall provide technical assistance to school attendance coordinators for carrying out these duties, through the Office of Truancy, Dropout and Alternative Education.

20A § 5053. Enforcement

1. **Civil violation.** Having control of a student who is habitually truant and being primarily responsible for that truancy constitutes a civil violation under this chapter.

2. **Jurisdiction.** The District Court shall have jurisdiction of these violations.

3. **Process.** Service of the petition on the parent will be in accordance with the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure.

4. **Repealed.**

5. **Disposition.** The court may order injunctive relief of one or more of the following actions against any person who commits a civil violation under subsection 1:

A. Ordering the offender to comply with this chapter;

B. Ordering the offender to take specific action to ensure the student's attendance at school;

C. Enjoining the offender from engaging in specific conduct which interferes with or may interfere with the student's attendance at school; or

D. Ordering the offender to undergo counseling by a professional selected by the offender, with the court's approval, or by the court. The counselor shall submit a written evaluation to the court and to the offender.

20A § 5054. Employment of truants prohibited

Any firm or corporation, or agent or manager of any firm or corporation, who hires or otherwise engages any student who is habitually truant as defined in this subchapter without a release from the student's supervising superintendent of schools shall be subject to the penalty provided in Title 26, section 781.

SUBCHAPTER III
DROPOUTS

20A § 5102. Definitions

As used in this subchapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, a "dropout" means any person who has withdrawn for any reason except death, or been expelled from school before graduation or completion of a program of studies and who has not enrolled in another educational institution or program.

20A § 5103. Dropout prevention committee

The following provisions apply to the dropout prevention committee.

1. **Committee.** Each superintendent, with school board approval, shall annually establish a separate dropout prevention committee for each individual school unit under the superintendent's supervision.

2. **Membership.** The dropout prevention committee shall be composed of the following members:

A. A member of the school board selected by that board;

B. A school administrator selected by the superintendent;

C. A teacher and a school counselor selected by the school administrative unit's teacher organization;

D. A parent selected by the unit's organized parent group, or, if no organized parent group exists, by the school board;

E. A school attendance coordinator from the district selected by the superintendent;

F. A high school student selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs A to E;

G. A dropout selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs A to E; and

H. A community resident of the district selected by the dropout prevention committee members selected in paragraphs A to E.

A dropout prevention committee may increase its membership by majority vote.

3. Terms and vacancies. Members shall serve in accordance with policy established by the school board.

4. Chair. The dropout prevention committee shall select a chair from among its members.

5. Responsibilities. The following provisions apply to responsibilities of the dropout prevention committee.

A. The dropout prevention committee shall:

(1) Study the problem of dropouts, habitual truancy and need for alternative programs, kindergarten to grade 12;

(2) Make recommendations for addressing the problems; and

(3) Submit a plan of action to the school board, in accordance with section 4502, subsection 5, paragraph L.

B. The dropout prevention committee shall consider the following when developing its plan:

(1) Reasons why students drop out of school;

(2) Maintenance of continuing contacts with recent dropouts in order to extend opportunities for

alternate educational programs, counseling and referral;

(3) Education of teachers and administrators about the dropout problem;

(4) Use of human services programs to help dropouts;

(5) The school administrative unit's policies on suspension, expulsion and other disciplinary action; and

(6) Discriminatory practices and attitudes within the school administrative unit.

6. **Annual report.** The dropout prevention committee shall meet at least annually to review its plan and to make recommendations to the school board.

7. **Department assistance.** The department shall provide technical assistance to a dropout prevention committee on request to the Office of Truancy, Dropout Prevention and Alternative Education.

Requirements for Alternative Education Programs and Services for Meeting the Needs of Students At-Risk of School Failure

REGULATIONS GOVERNING BASIC SCHOOL APPROVAL (Chapter 125)

This rule establishes school approval standards governing the school administrative units and public schools of the state and adopts procedures for ascertaining compliance with all applicable legal requirements, as authorized by Title 20-A, Chapter 206.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (125.04)

... each school shall have a written curriculum approved by the commissioner.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME (125.05)

C. Kindergarten students may be excused during the current school year for up to five of the 175 instructional days in order to provide time for the screening of the current year's of next year's students. The purpose of the screening shall be to identify possible special needs students and students at-risk of school failure. A plan for the use of the screening days shall be submitted for approval by the Commissioner and shall contain at least the following information:

1. The projected number of children to be screened ;
2. A description of the screening process, to include:
   a. A statement of the purpose(s) of the screening;
   b. A description of the staffing pattern of the personnel doing the screening (numbers and titles);
   c. A list of screening instruments/techniques;
   d. The estimated time required for each screening: and,
   e. The method(s) used to accomplish the purpose of the screening.
3. The proposed dates and times of the screening.

E. Alternative programs within elementary and secondary schools may operate for fewer hours than regular programs with the approval of the commissioner.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (125.23)

A. Purpose

The purpose of a School Improvement Plan is to promote excellence in the schools of the state through a process of long-range planning. The superintendent of each unit or a designee shall have charge of the on-going school improvement process in each school unit. Each school administrative unit shall submit a School Improvement Plan that includes attention to the needs of each school within the school unit, including vocational education programs. The process shall result in adoption by the school board of the School Improvement Plan by July 1, 1986, except that subsection B, paragraph 5 (p) shall be completed by July 1, 1987.

B. Development of the School Improvement Plan

(1) The School Improvement Plan process shall include a comprehensive assessment of needs, the establishment of goals, action strategies and evaluative criteria to assess attainment of goals.

(2) The assessment of needs and the setting of goals shall reflect current educational research and practices as they relate to student achievement, curriculum and program, and school personnel.

(3) The School Improvement Plan shall incorporate the requirements and/or recommendations of the state.

(4) Teachers, administrators, citizens, board members and, as appropriate, pupils shall be actively involved in developing the plan.

(5) Areas to be addressed:

p. A plan for identifying at-risk students in kindergarten through grade 12, but not limited to truants and dropouts, and the development of appropriate alternative programs to meet their needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND GRADUATION STANDARDS (CHAPTER 127)

Summary: The school board of each school administrative unit or board of directors of each private school approved for tuition purposes, may prescribe, subject to the approval of the commissioner, instructional requirements in addition to the minimum requirements of this rule.

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS (127.06)

A. Role of Alternative Programs (20-A M.R.S.A.; Chapter 127)

A school administrative unit, may establish one or more programs as alternatives to the regular course(s) of study.

Alternative programs shall operate as part of the elementary or secondary school program. Alternative programs shall have stated goals, objectives and procedures for implementing and assessing their effectiveness. Alternative programs may allow students to attend school part-time. They may be scheduled apart from the regular school day.

To meet the needs of at-risk students as identified in 125.23, B. (5) p, a school administrative unit may enroll students in alternative programs in other school administrative units and/or in approved private alternative programs or schools.

B. Procedural Requirements (Chapter 127.06)

School administrative units shall develop an Alternative Educational Plan for every student enrolled in an alternative program. The primary goal of an Alternative Educational Plan will be the completion by the student of high school diploma requirements.

Each Alternative Educational Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following components:

(1) A description of the student's academic strengths and the observed or measurable deficiencies.

(2) A description of the annual educational goals that the student may reasonably be expected to achieve during the school year.

(3) A description of short-term instructional objectives leading to each annual educational goal.

C. Role of Alternative Instruction (127.065)

Up to one-fourth of the credits required for a high school diploma may be earned outside the regular school program, if approved in a policy of the school board. Credits earned in this manner may include, but not be limited to, the following: tutoring, adult education, and correspondence courses.

Correspondence schools used for this purpose must be approved by the Commissioner. No public funds may be used to underwrite such instruction.

Tutoring for credit purposes must be by a certified teacher, or under the supervision of a certified teacher.

All such nontraditional instruction must be approved in advance by the school principal, in accordance with school board policies, and carried on under the principal's general supervision.